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PECULIARITIES OF TEACHING ENGLISH FOR SPECIAL PURPOSES (ESP)

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Abstract. *The paper raises the questions to be considered when planning a course of English for special purposes (ESP). Both reading for information and communicative approach are viewed.*

Key words: *English for special purposes (ESP), extract information, lexical content, specialized vocabulary, grammar constructions, comprehension, situation of utterance.*

ОСОБЛИВОСТІ ВИКЛАДАННЯ ПРОФЕСІЙНО ОРІЄНТОВАНОЇ АНГЛІЙСЬКОЇ МОВИ

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Анотація. *Розглядаються питання, що мають враховуватися при укладанні курсу професійно-орієнтованої англійської. Враховано аспекти пошукового читання і комунікативний підхід у навчанні.*

Ключові слова: *Професійно орієнтована англійська, пошук інформації, лексичне наповнення, спеціалізована лексика, граматичні конструкції, розуміння, мовленнєва ситуація.*

Persons in any occupational category will operate more efficiently if they have a greater command of the language. English is often learned with some specific vocational or educational purpose. For such students, it is essential to extract certain kinds of information from texts (scientific, political, economic etc) and courses for them should be designed basically like those intended for practicing reading for information. Nevertheless additional observations should be considered.

1. The subject matter for an ESP class, particularly when the students group is not homogeneous in interests and intentions. "Physical and Biological

Sciences," "Humanities," "Social Sciences," "Engineering and Technology" as terms are of little use in deciding what material will be useful to particular students.

2. Lexical content for the particular group of students. They will need to know the general English vocabulary in common use as well as a specialized vocabulary which varies widely according to field of interest and may frequently include terminology with which the English teacher, who studied in the humanities, is only vaguely familiar, if at all, since knowledge and the terminology associated with it is proliferating at such a rapid pace. ESP teachers must see that dictionaries for specialized fields are readily available.

3. Who should be selected to teach an ESP course? A specialist in the English language or a specialist in the major field of the students who has a good grasp of English? Or should this be an area for team-teaching? When the English-language specialist teaches the course, the students often understand the real meaning of the text better than the teacher does, once the mystery of the strange words is overcome. This is an example of a situation for cooperative learning. It is also an area where individualized or group projects are useful.

4. Grammatical constructions to be emphasized. There has been some research into the types of structures used more frequently in certain types of writing in the sciences, in economics, in history, and in other fields, but results are far from conclusive. Do historians tend to use the comparatives and superlatives more frequently than others? Do discursive writers in scientific and technical spheres use the passive voice more than creative writers do? [3, 390]. Corbluth feels that "there are certain linguistic characteristics in most expository, intellectual, or academic English (the English of any subject that can be studied) which distinguishes it from ordinary colloquial English (chat) on the one hand and from literary or imaginative English on the other." [1, 280]. He speaks "of the way a piece of writing logically coheres, partly through the use of connectives

and partly through semantic means. A writer of this kind is typically defining, exemplifying, proving, contrasting. ... If a student works on *any* examples of such intellectual discourse, they will be relevant to his needs." [1, 281]. This should be encouraging to teachers of ESP while they await more conclusive research results and the incorporation of these results into available materials.

Corbluth also notes that ESP teachers usually choose for their classes "models of clear and lucid exposition," whereas much scientific writing (or writing in any field) is "badly organized, turgid, unclear – poor English, and poor scientific English." [1, 285]. What should be the reaction of the ESP teacher to this real situation? In our opinion, students with sufficient knowledge of lexical and grammar material should be introduced to genuine, non-adapted texts with the teacher being there to draw their attention to certain language items, to explain, to compare, and so on.

5. Ways and means to test comprehension. The classroom exercises and tests in ESP courses should be of an active and participatory character. Multiple-choice questions, carefully drafted, may be useful for testing the students' ability to detect nuances of meaning which derive from structural elements.

Due attention should also be paid to translation which can serve as means of both practice and checking comprehension and other language skills. Technical translation is a specialized craft which should be expertly taught to those who require or desire it. For common purposes of the ESP course, students should be asked to draw out important points from larger passages, either in the form of succinct note-taking or summarizing, or in order to provide answers to thought-provoking questions on the text. This parallels more closely the ultimate purposes for which the students are in the class.

But reading is not the only aspect of the ESP course. Frequently, programs are designed to prepare students to interact in specific professional or vocational settings. Research is being conducted, for instance, into the type of language used

between doctors and patients, factory supervisors and operatives, social workers and persons in need of their assistance. Howatt points out that designing a course which prepares students to interact in specific roles in real-life situations requires that the course designer "first discover what activities the job entails and what part is played in these activities by language of different kinds. He must decide how much emphasis is to be placed on talking and how much on reading or writing. He must find out what topics come up often enough to be worth discussing in class and he must also bear in mind the kind of people the pupil will eventually have to deal with." [5, 7].

The Council for Cultural Co-operation of the Council of Europe (CCC) has published "an analytical classification of the categories of adults needing to learn foreign languages" which is intended "to provide a starting-point for a description of linguistic situations" in which persons in these occupations will have to use English. [7, 63]. The CCC classification breaks down the actual activities in which persons of specific occupations will need to employ, to varying degrees of proficiency, the skills of understanding, speaking, reading, and writing a foreign language. Actors, musicians, and dancers, for instance, will need, among other things, to be able to understand and give stage directions and instructions; office supervisors will need to be able to read written documents in the fields with which they are associated, to draft reports, and to write letters; guards, conductors, air hostesses, and stewards will be required to understand a language of everyday communication in order to give information and attend to the comfort and security of passengers; while waiters and bar personnel will be required to understand and speak, not only a language of everyday communication, but a quite specialized language as well.

A breakdown of this type is equally applicable to adolescent students who have a specific career goal in mind. Students can extemporize and practice using what they know in a realistic and purposeful way.

As used by the contributing experts of the Council for Cultural Cooperation of the Council of Europe, "situation of utterance" is not a simple concept like acting out the buying of a ticket at an airport or the ordering of a meal in a restaurant. It includes "the sum of those extra-linguistic elements that are present in the minds of speakers or in external physical reality at the moment of communication... [which] play a part in determining the form or the function of the linguistic elements" [4, 68], and also the particular spatio-temporal situation in which speaker and hearer are interacting [6, 413] in order to produce some result, whether purely psychological or concrete. The use of situations of utterance is intended to make language learning "a process of acquiring a new aid to action." [7, 69]. In this way, they have great potential for motivating students to engage in autonomous interaction.[2, 245].

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